

US Chess Hybrid Task Force, Final Report

The US Chess Hybrid Task Force was a committee of the following individuals:

- John Fernandez (MO, EB, Chair)
- Dewain Barber (CA-S)
- Mike Hoffpauir (VA, EB)
- Beatriz Marinello (NY)
- Carol Meyer (NC, ED)
- John Rockefeller (MD)
- Hal Terrie (NH)

Tasked with studying the following ADM:

(DM21-19/ADM 21-14)

(Beatriz Marinello, NY; Dr. Leroy Dubeck, NJ; Sean Manross, CA-S; Dewain Barber, CA-S; Tom Langland, CA-N; Jim Eade, CA-N; Alan Kantor, TN; Blaine Webb, AK)

US Chess Federation Delegates who are senior citizens over 65 years old and Delegates with underlying health conditions may attend the Delegates Meetings virtually. Requests for this accommodation should be sent to the US Chess office by June 1 of the year of the meeting.

REFERRED to the Executive Board to create a task force to study, investigate, and issue a report and recommendation regarding the feasibility of hybrid Delegates Meetings that would allow remote participation.

Response: The Executive Board is appointing a small task force to examine the feasibility of this proposal.

The task force first wants to thank the Delegates for this thoughtful motion. We first want to note that while there is great merit to making the Delegates meeting accessible to more individuals, there are very serious obstacles to making such a hybrid event successful. The task force looked specifically at two obstacles: 1) Criteria and 2) Meeting Management.

First was the criteria by which a Delegate becomes eligible for participating in a hybrid Delegate's meeting.

The ADM itself contemplates two criteria for which individuals are eligible:

- Delegates over 65 years old
- Delegates with underlying health conditions

The task force points out that the first criteria of 65 is somewhat arbitrary, and a case could be made for any age, either younger or older. As pertains to underlying health conditions, as those are not well defined, there is not a great deal of clarity how those individuals would be approved. The task force believes that a body would likely have to be appointed to review and approve or deny applications to be a virtual Delegate. An additional note pertains to the fact that it would be impossible to maintain complete privacy of medical data in such a process, as it would be known which Delegates have which medical conditions by those involved in the decision-making process. This may prove an obstacle to Delegates who would be reticent to submit their medical information to a committee.

In addition to medical reasons, there are some other criteria which could be just as meritorious for individuals to be hybrid Delegates:

- Distance. It was noted in task force discussions that the geographical distance of the United States would be a very valid reason for remote attendance, with a particular note to our Delegates from Alaska and Hawaii, who always have significant travel to US Open locations.
- Family Situations. As the chair had a birth of a child during this past year, it was further noted that there are situations where family issues of any type make the trip to the US Open challenging.
- Last-minute Medical Issues. The task force also considered what happens in the case of last-minute issues, for example, a positive COVID test.

It was pointed out that regardless of criteria, once there is a significant (for example, more than 50) Delegates participating remotely, that no current technology is going to allow for a well-run meeting, and that likely regardless of criteria, there would possibly need to be a limit on the number of remote Delegates as well. Note that there are likely issues of achieving a quorum as well as maintaining one, should, for example, there be Internet issues on-site at the US Open.

Additionally, it was observed that perhaps in-person incentivization could be achieved by providing some mechanism of different voting classes for in-person versus remote Delegates, but that could be highly controversial and would need to be further investigated.

The second item the task force considered was the logistics for the meeting itself. Of critical importance is the technology we would require to run the Delegates meeting, far beyond our current on-site requirements at the US Open. We would need to ensure that there are more microphones on-site, most importantly at the Parliamentarian's table, as well as a strong high-speed internet connection. It is possible that improvements in both Zoom (or potentially alternative meeting providers) as well as Internet would ameliorate the issues that a hybrid meeting poses in 2023.

It was noted that with two groups of individuals, a staff member would likely need to find a way to manage speaking on behalf of or against a motion in some manner. Within Zoom, for example, we could reserve the "Raise Hand" function for speaking for/against motion, vs. Points or Order, etc., which would likely need to be achieved by physical hand-raising. This would

necessitate some staff member(s) (parliamentarian?) who isn't directly involved in the meeting to monitor and control the proceedings. A note from Jim Slaughter, an attorney, Certified Professional Parliamentarian, Professional Registered Parliamentarian, and past President of the American College of Parliamentary Lawyers on hybrid meetings, points out some of the challenges:

Hybrid meeting arrangements and rules tend to be far more complex. After all, how do you make certain that members participating virtually are treated equally with regard to debating, making motions, and voting as those in the room? Generally, as with absentee voting, it is difficult to combine votes in the room taken by voice or rising with electronic votes of those participating virtually. Most likely a system will be needed in which everyone votes electronically, even those physically present at the meeting.

<https://www.jimsllaughter.com/virtual-electronic-or-virtual-meetings---hybrid-meetings>

Additionally, to allow for the above to be supported, we understand that once the criteria and meeting logistics are finalized, there will most certainly be updates to our Bylaws which must take place to allow the above. As we were not able to come up with either finalized criteria or meeting logistics, the Task Force cannot provide any insights on the Bylaws changes required.

We also recommend that the US Open Committee as well as the Director of Events are consulted as there are most likely hotel impacts in terms of technology needs and room size (let alone the actual amount of rooms on-site). *As Internet costs from many hotels for a large group to support Zoom would likely be in the tens of thousands of dollars, this would have a significant impact on the costs of the Delegates meeting at the US Open. (The chair's professional experience leads him to approximate a hypothetical 2023 internet fee cost of \$20,000, based on data fed into Encore's tabulator assuming 80 Mbps for a 150 person event for 1 day).* We recommend that US Chess consider thinking through what price point would warrant the benefit of a hybrid format.

There are some options to bifurcate the meeting which were also discussed by the task force. One potential option is for a "Pre-Meeting" of Delegates for items such as ADMs in advance of the Delegates meeting, with some structure that refers contentious votes (some particular number of objections, etc.) would then be referred to the Delegates Meeting could be a way to solve some of the logistical issues at hand. As this was not entirely in the scope of the ADM, we did not further explore it, but certainly want to mention it as a potential option for a more inclusive body of Delegates. Agenda management could be handled differently in such an environment, potentially reducing the size of the agenda and the overall length of the meeting. The recent one-day Delegates meetings at the US Open, if they become a trend, could make the Delegates process more accessible to more interested individuals.

The task force would like to note for the record that if both the Executive Board and Delegates agree that the principles of this ADM are meritorious in terms of allowing for a much more inclusive body of Delegates, that they also consider the possibility of a fully virtual meeting which would likely remove most, if not all, of the above obstacles.

It is therefore the recommendation of the task force that the Executive Board and the Delegates do the following as the above two items are not conducive to making an immediate switch to a Hybrid Delegate's meeting and instead do the following:

- Reconvene the Task Force after the 2024 US Open in Norfolk, VA
- Empower that Task Force to provide recommended ADMs and Bylaws changes for the 2025 US Open in Middleton, WI
- This could empower US Chess to have the first Hybrid Delegates meeting as early as 2026 (location for US Open TBD)

By a vote of 7-0, the task force agrees that this letter fairly represents its position.

Sincerely,

John Fernandez (MO, EB, Chair), Dewain Barber (CA-S), Mike Hoffpauir (VA, EB), Beatriz Marinello (NY), Carol Meyer (NC, ED), John Rockefeller (MD), Hal Terrie (NH)